

Minutes

Boylston Street Corridor Study Committee
January 6, 2021 12:00PM

Committee members present: John VanScoyoc (Chair), Wendy Machmuller, Rachna Balakrishna, Deborah Brown, Tom Nally, Carlos Ridreujo, Joe Gaudino, Wendy Friedman, Mark Zarrillo

Guests: Chris Dempsey, Todd Kirrane

Staff: Eddie Bates, Kara Brewton

Members of the public: Jennifer Dopazo-Gilbert, Linda Pehlke, Matthew Hyatt, Steve Heikin

Meeting materials: Agenda

The Site Visit/Meeting began at 12:00PM

1. Approval of minutes from the Urban Design/Massing Subcommittee meetings from November 23, 2020 and December 21, 2020 and the full committee meeting from December 9, 2020

VOTED: By unanimous Urban Design/Massing Subcommittee members' vote: WF, JG, CR, TN , the minutes from the Urban Design/Massing Subcommittee meetings from November 23, 2020 and December 21, 2020 meetings were approved

VOTED: By unanimous roll call vote: JV, WM, RB, DB, TN, CR, JG, WF. Minutes were approved
Mark Zarrillo abstained from the vote.

2. Welcome New Boylston Street Corridor Study Committee Member, Mark Zarrillo

John VanScoyoc introduced new member, Mark Zarrillo, to members of the committee. Mark then briefly explained his background to the committee.

3. Discussion on the proposed Gateway East Bus Priority Lane and transportation and infrastructure in the Boylston Street Corridor with Chris Dempsey, Chair of the Transportation Board, and Todd Kirrane, Transportation Administrator

Chris Dempsey, Chair of the Transportation Board began providing a presentation to committee members on the proposed Gateway East Bus Lanes.

The first section of the presentation focused on the history of transportation of Brookline Village and Chris showed old pictures of the area. Originally, Brookline Village in Gateway East was served by trolleys and there was a large trolley stop in the middle of Boylston Street. The neighborhood also had a large number of trees and was very walkable. As cars became the more popular form of transportation, the trolley line and station were removed and Gateway East and Boylston Street became very car-oriented, which has resulted in today's configuration.

Chris explained that Gateway East is still a critical transit connection and stated that it is currently the crossroad for three bus routes servicing Brookline including the 60, 65, and 66, in which in the 66 Bus has the highest ridership in all of Brookline. The area also serves as a critical connection to and from the Longwood Medical Area, the Green Line (D and E branches) and other transit services.

Chris explained the growth of bus lanes across the region and provided a map of other area communities which have implemented them in recent years. Chris continued this discussion on the proposed bus lanes in Gateway East which would begin at the Boston border on Washington Street and then continue to where Washington Street meets Station Street. He explained that these bus lanes would be of no cost to the town, no hardscape changes, and will cause no delay on the Gateway East project timeline. On the eastbound section of Boylston Street from possibly the Old Lincoln School to High Street, there would be a need to move the current two lane highway down to one lane. As you get closer to High Street, there would be a lane for right hand turns only. This would provide some possible outdoor space for restaurants such as La Morra.

Chris then asks members if they would like Boylston Street to be a highway or a street. He went through a number of sites, including some care-oriented sites, the Homewood Suites site and La Morra. Utilizing information on these sites, Chris went through an analysis of annual property revenue from each site which saw higher tax revenues per sq. ft. for denser sites.

After the presentation, Chris took questions from the committee. Chris also stated the next step for this project would be a pilot program.

Members made comments and asked questions on the project.

Todd Kirrane then spoke and stated that the Town has been speaking with the MBTA and MassDot District 6 which would give their final blessing on this project. Todd further stated that they have approached this project with an open mind. He also discussed that if the Town would like to approach taking over this stretch of Boylston Street, the proposal would need to go before Town Meeting.

John asked the committee by a show of hands to show of hands if members generally agree that this is a good project for a pilot program and members agreed. Mark Zarrillo brought up the idea that there should be a sub-committee looking at the streetscape and John stated that this is a good idea but would require more discussion.

4. Updates from the Public Participation Subcommittee and Urban Design/Massing Subcommittee meetings

Carlos provided an updated on the Urban Design/Massing Subcommittee and discussed that he and Tom Nally had both done an analysis on the different sites and presented their findings to the subcommittee.

Kara then spoke about the next steps for this subcommittee to produce a final deliverable to the full committee. She first mentioned that Wendy F. and Joe are looking at the Design Guidelines and that she, Eddie and Wendy M. are planning to interview property owners in the corridor. Also, Kara talked about a meeting with Bulfinch, the owner of 10 Brookline Place where they plan in the future to redevelop the building into lab space. She then said that EDAB has issued a subcommittee to explore lab use as a permitted use in Brookline. Kara stated the next steps would be to bring all of this information

and analysis into one presentation with 3D mapping diagrams and present it to the full committee but it will be some time until all of the details can be finalized.

Eddie then stated the Public Participation Subcommittee is currently finalizing a public survey which will go out to everyone in the neighborhood. There will be a flyer that is both mailed and emailed out and the survey will have most likely a two-week timeline.

Meeting ended at 1:16PM

Chat Summary

00:53:10 Todd Kirrane: Initial meetings with MassDOT D6 staff was very positive and they were already thinking about improvements that could be made for other modes with the 2 to 1 area. It was not seen as a non-starter and deal killer

00:53:44 Carlos Ridruejo: Great to hear this, Todd.

00:56:13 Todd Kirrane: VHB Traffic Memo

<https://www.brooklinema.gov/DocumentCenter/View/23129/Gateway-East-Dedicated-Bus-Lane---Traffic-Design-Implications>

00:58:12 Todd Kirrane: Yes they do

01:04:57 Wendy Friedman: Matthew, do you feel a *dedicated* right is necessary (there isn't one now), or just any right?

01:05:36 Todd Kirrane: The right turn will likely not be long, only 2-3 car lengths, and we would not want parking that close to the intersection.

01:05:54 Wendy Friedman: Thanks for clarifying Todd.

01:09:12 Todd Kirrane: Initial thought for the pilot on staff's behalf is that LMA shuttles would be able to use these lanes as well as emergency vehicles

01:15:58 Wendy Machmuller: hey I'm sorry I have to step out...

01:26:00 Todd Kirrane: <https://www.brooklinema.gov/DocumentCenter/View/23226/Gateway-East-Priority-Bus-Lane-Conceptual-Plan-12102020>